5: Simons K-5 (ca. 1882) 1885
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An Exploration of the Goajira Peninsula, U.S. of Colombia.

By F. A. A. Simons.

Map, p. 840.

Since the publication of my last paper on the Sierra Nevada in 1881,* I have been commissioned by the National Government of Colombia to survey the two Atlantic States of the Magdalena and Bolivar, and especially to write a report on the hitherto unexplored region of the Goajira Indians. A summary of this I have now the honour of laying before the Royal Geographical Society.

The north-easterly corner of the United States of Colombia (formerly New Granada) terminates in a large peninsula, that, projecting for some 120 miles out into the Caribbean Sea, forms the extensive Gulf of Maracaybo. This peninsula is known as the Goajira. It was ceded by the State of Magdalena in 1872, to form a National Territory, for the better civilisation of its Indians. One half of it, however, is claimed by the Venezuelans, and a dispute that at one time threatened to culminate in war between the two nations, was amicably settled by referring the question to the King of Spain as arbitrator. His decision *has not yet been made public*. Three-fourths surrounded by sea, the Goajira is on the land, or south-westerly, side separated from the State of the Magdalena by a natural boundary, formed partly by the Rio Ranchería, with the outlying hills of the Nevada, variously called in old maps Cerros de Soblalo, de Barranca, &c., and partly by the Montes of Oca.

Very little or nothing is known of the history of these Indians. Although the peninsula played an important part in the first discoveries, none of the early chroniclers seem to have paid much attention to the country. Juan de Castellanos, who resided some time at the Cabo de la Vela, dedicates a "mido canto" to the peuria. The "Floresta de Santa Maria," written by José Nicolas de la Rosa in 1789, gives many interesting data on the customs and manners of the Indians; this work must have supplied the more recent writings on the subject, for the same errors run through them all. That the present race are not the original inhabitants of the peninsula is certain. The Indians themselves have a legend that they came from a great distance, and are able to point out traces of villages belonging to the former inhabitants, whom they assert are the Arhuacos of the Sierra Nevada. Sometimes their old graves are accidentally come across, yielding to the fortunate finder a rich harvest of *tumas* (pieces of polished stone with a hole drilled through), curiously shaped pieces of gold, and other ornaments (clay), identical with those found in great profusion all over the Sierra Nevada. Now,

* 'Proceedings R. G. S.,' 1881, p. 722.

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● 172 those tumas are all made from carnelian, jasper, or other reddish varieties of silica, and the stone, according to the Indians, is not to be found in the Goajira. While ascending Macuira, several places were pointed out to me, especially near the top, in which I was entrusted to look for treasure "of the Arhuaco." They themselves, although coveting tumas above everything, are, curiously enough, afraid to look for them, not hesitating, [711] however, to appropriate any found by chance. This, combined with the fear of mentioning their dead, points to some sort of religion or belief in a superior Being. They evidently took possession by conquest, 174 driving the weaker "Arhuaco" out, and have managed to assert their rights to this day. It is rather an historical anomaly that such a small [161] tribe, which probably never exceeded 80,000, should have been able to conserve intact their absolute freedom, their manners and customs uncontaminated, in spite of the accessibility of their territory, surrounded as it is by the sea, and the continual commerce that has been going on for centuries.

133 Commencing with the topography of the country, the mountain system attracts attention most—more so, as a remarkable error has been propagated, that the Goajira is one large fertile plain with only one or two isolated hills. At least one-half of the country is hilly. There are in fact two Goajiras; one known as the Lower Goajira is the broad level plain extending from the river Rancheria to a little beyond the Tota. The other, or Upper, Goajira is the hilly sterile region between the Tota and Punta Espada. The Upper Goajira is simply a volcanic eruption, a conglomeration of low hills, conspicuous from the many cone-shaped forms, and the parallel ridges in which they have been thrown up. These parallel lines run chiefly north-west by south-east, and are separated by two large plains, thus forming three distinct groups of hills running from sea to sea. The first and most important of the three is the easterly or Macuira range. This fine, bold, interesting mountain mass rises in front of Chimare, about 12 miles from the sea-shore, and terminates at the most easterly point of the Goajira, forming the rocky headland known as the Punta Espada (Jarián). Due to its elevation and position, it serves as a species of cloud-trap detaining the lower clouds that drive in from seaward impelled by the easterly or trade winds, that blow here with great force most part of the year. This is the only spot in all the Goajira that can really be called fertile. I ascended the two highest points. The north or Macuira proper lies in front of Puerto Estrella, and is composed of several peaks ranging between 2400 and 2600 feet above sea-level. 133 241 None of them offer any difficulty in climbing, as the slopes are covered [137] with gardens to within 500 feet of the top. The vegetation is similar to that of the Sierra Nevada at 6000 feet, and the temperature was very low, showing at midday 61° Fahr. The highest point at the southern extremity in front of Punta Espada is Ara-ara. Owing to the low dense

5: Simons K-5 (ca. 1882) 1815
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302 291 called *yeu* if made of plaited straw, and *capanas* if made of wool, with large tassel (worn behind). The two can be combined and adorned with a couple of feathers in front. When made entirely of feathers, it becomes *tarina*. An Indian's toilet would not be complete without [293] a *kapipoito*, a piece of leather fastened round the left wrist by a twist of wool to receive the recoil of the bow-string when shooting. Paint is 302 common to both sexes, and in excess. They assert that it saves their complexions from the sun. The last thing an Indian does, on mounting horse for the day's journey, is to call for the powder-box, and plentifully besprinkle his face. The powders *wapatepo* or *marua* are rotten wood; [384] *guaraqui*, a black stain from a wild nut; and *parisa*, very popular among the fairer sex, is the colour extracted from a leaf and mixed with fat.

291 The woman's dress is invariably, at present, made from foreign cotton, [77] and is a plain sack with a hole for the head and two others for the arms. With the wind it blows out and makes her look like a balloon. The white cotton is dyed black with *divi-divi*, or yellowish-brown with *mora* [386] (yellow wood), or reddish-brown with the suckers of mangroves. The Indians are exceptionally clean and nice in their dress, and, however [515] poor, keep a reserve suit for state occasions. Women alone wear the *pûna* and the *siraps*. The pûna are like a pair of braces; long strings 301 of beads passing over each shoulder to cross each other on the breast and back, held in position at the waist by the siraps, a sort of sash or belt made of beads likewise. Small strings a few ounces in weight are put on the *female* child a few months after birth, and gradually increased, according to the strength of the child and the purse of the parents. Pûnas are made with any beads except black, a red variety with white eye (*lowkka*) preferred, and weigh from 2 to 10 lbs. With siraps any coloured bead will do, *pûna* or black ones the rule, and they weigh from 1 to 10 lbs. A married woman may wear the pûna until [849] her first confinement, when it is laid aside. Poor Indians who cannot afford beads for the pûna make it of cotton dyed black and beaded. Among the many necklaces, tumas are the most valuable. These curious [77] perforated stones are only found in the graves of prehistoric races, both in the peninsula itself and the Sierra Nevada. There are many varieties. The round ones varying in size from a large marble to a pea are *tûma* (a name generalised by the Spaniards); those in shape of small charm-barrels are *assarari*; the pear-shaped, according as they are long or dumpy, *parinpa*, and *pauriniapa*; the bugle is *parauria*, &c. Mineralogically they are bits of red jasper, carnelian, and reddish sardonyx. Their value depends upon the intensity of red and size. A large one at [435] present is worth a head of cattle; a necklace has from 15 to 30, varying in size. Bracelets are as varied and in as much profusion as necklaces; they are called *kipuse*, from *siapa*, the hand. On the foot they also wear strings of carnelians and beads. They have two names, the aristocratic *cashlamale* and the common *pauriluse*.

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
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we wanted to make. After knives, maize was the best medium of exchange, and we could buy that from the monks as long as we used the mission station as our headquarters, but once we went further afield we were not able to carry any to use for barter. Cloth was also in demand. We had a couple of bales of the white material the Indians usually bought. Unfortunately we had not been able to get the best barter commodity of all: tuma beads. These are large polished stone beads of different sizes made of cornelian and other stones, for all of which the Guajiro has special names. Tuma beads are found in old Indian graves, especially in and around Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, though these graves are also said to exist in Guajira. However, it was not advisable, we were told, to try and prove that or to embark on archaeological excavations. To do so might easily lead to trouble.

Later we made a rich find of tuma beads in graves in Sierra Nevada, but then we were not able to go back to Guajira. The richer Indians especially valued tuma very highly and often paid as much as a horse for one bead. We could not have used anything as precious for our small deals, but they would have been useful for getting riding and pack-animals. As it was we bought a couple of hammocks and some earthenware vessels.

One must be careful not to do a Guajiro over a deal. That can involve one in difficulties and a claim for damages. It goes without saying that, in the Indians' view, it was we who came off second best, and we would not have had it otherwise.

We took leave of our hosts feeling slightly guilty because of that photograph which was a secret between us, the girl and her guardian, but also satisfied with our first expedition in Macuira. We loaded a donkey with our purchases which an Indian drove direct to Nazaret, for we were to make a detour in order to visit another rancho. The sand made very heavy going and we decided for the future we would ride, especially as we should be going further afield.

As soon as we drew near the next rancho, we realized that something was afoot. We could hear a buzz of voices

8:Armstrong & Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948
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When migrating from one locality to another the *Goajiro* generally dismantle their houses and take them along, piling the poles and thatch on the backs of burros. Sometimes, however, they leave them for their own or someone else's use in the future.

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

Goajiro dress has changed little since the time of Nicolás de la Rosa (18th century). Men normally wear only a breechcloth, a necklace, and a head band with feather attached (pl. 72, *top*); but when traveling, paying visits, or receiving company they wear a large loincloth with many folds, a mantle (nowadays of bright colors), and an immense sash, in which they carry their arrows. A knitted string bag is hung from the waistband. In towns trousers and shirts are worn. The women wear a cotton dress, sometimes made like a simple sack with holes cut for the head and arms. The puna—long strings of beads passing over both shoulders, crossing each other on the breast and back and held in place by a sash or belt of beads (the sirapo)—is placed on a female child a few months after birth and gradually augmented according to the parents' wealth and the child's age. Black beads are generally used for the sirapo, colored ones for the puna. A married woman wears the puna until her first confinement. After her seclusion at puberty, a robe, sometimes containing 8 or 10 yards of embroidered material, is also worn by a *Goajiro* woman, but the loosely folded cloth which was her sole covering before puberty is still worn beneath it. Women, unlike men, are modest and avoid being seen naked.

Some young girls have as many as 100 turns of beads around their waists, as well as many around their wrists and ankles. Red coral is preferred, but most beads are made from seeds or coconut shell and are cut out by means of a hollow metal reamer twirled rapidly between the palms. The perforated shell may then be used as a colander. Glass and porcelain beads and earrings are also worn. The most prized ornaments are the tumas—polished and perforated stone ornaments found in some of the old graves. On dress occasions necklaces of beads and gold ornaments are worn. These, found in *Tairona* graves, are fashioned in the form of tiny animals, frogs, turtles, etc.

The men, except the medicine men, wear their hair short, kept back by a ring or crown made of plaited straw, or of wool with a tassel behind. Often the two are combined and adorned with a couple of feathers in front; or the whole may be made of feathers. For protection against mosquitos and sun both sexes paint their skin with powders made from rotten wood, a black stain made from a wild nut, and another color extracted from leaves and mixed with fat. After puberty women cut their hair short, keeping the shorn tresses in a bag hung from the roof; henceforth they never let it grow beyond the neck. They make designs on